Print

I became aware of newspapers when I began to wait each afternoon after school for the "plop" of the *Akron Beacon Journal* on the landing outside our apartment door. My interest, at that time, was the comics page, and "Dick Tracy" in particular.

It was only when I got to high school that I became interested in journalism. I started covering sports for the *Crusader* at St. Mary High School. (It's long been merged with our crosstown rival St. Vincent to become St. Vincent-St. Mary High School, the pre-pro stomping ground of LeBron James.) My first stories were play-by-plays of the game. Eventually I learned how to summarize a game, sketch the most important plays, and organize a story.

During high school, I wrote a column, drew caricatures of those I interviewed, and served as sports editor. In my senior year I was editor of the *Crusader*. After I got hit by a car, I edited my last issue from an easy chair at home. When I started college at the University of Akron, there was no doubt I would work on the *Buchtelite*. I became so heavily involved with the paper that at one point I was setting headlines from a tray of cold type to meet a deadline. I probably would have become editor, but my physics classes demanded attention. During postgraduate work, reporting was confined to my own work in the form of papers and presentations. There my journalism apprenticeship served me well when writing papers. For example, because of the limited range of concepts in most technical papers, the writing becomes repetitious. In that sense it is like sports reporting, which demands colorful synonyms to keep the story fresh. Writing sports also taught me how to change the rhythms of sentences within a paragraph to keep the narrative moving. It has been useful when writing these editorials.

Will print disappear as more and more information is delivered on the Web? After all, the majority of readers of *Optical Engineering* will read the papers in this issue, and this editorial, on an LCD. In addition, we encourage authors to incorporate videos and color images in their pa-pers. But, I don't believe print (ink-on-paper technology) will disappear anytime soon.

Some already wax nostalgic about printed matter. They point to Amazon's Kindle reader and a growing number of similar devices and proclaim that the age of Gutenberg is over and the age of display is at hand. These gadgets remove one of the objections to electronic publishing in that they are portable like books. Certainly text in these devices is searchable, although none, as far as I know, provide the context that a good index can to narrow your search. Also, the Kindles and their kin provide enormous amounts of storage in a small volume.

But as I read my morning *Atlanta Journal Constitution* and Sunday *New York Times*, I find that they have attributes that I truly prize. One of these might be called "dismissability," the ability to scan a page containing a number of stories and ads and dismiss some fraction of that material to focus on what I want to know, what I need to know, or what piques my curiosity. In contrast, because most electronic media are organized on a single story basis, I have to sift through lots of ore to find the attractive gems. Alongside these gems are others that I didn't know about—the items in my peripheral vision that I discover just by opening the page. Such stories are relegated to snippets or omitted because of lack space on the homepage.

Another attraction of print is temporary storage. I can start a long story in the *New Yorker*, put it down on my hassock, and pick it up later to finish it. The LCD screen is not really amenable to such a strategy. Yes, I can leave the page open on the computer's desktop, but the demands of screen space and clutter eventually cause me to scan what should be read thoughtfully, or bookmark the page, never to be seen again.

This "intrusiveness," the presence of a bookmarked or dog-eared or folded piece of print, forces me to deal with something that I'm reading. It was this same feature that caused me to pay attention when an issue of this journal appeared on my desk. It may have sat there for while, but eventually I had to scan the table of contents, skim the abstracts, and read the relevant papers and other papers that struck my fancy. I wish there were a form of electronic intrusiveness wherein I would be e-mailed the first

page of each paper in a journal issue, packaged as a PDF file, to be scanned and skimmed for downloading whatever I found something of interest.

I value print. It is a magnificent achievement of humankind. This spring my wife and I took a cruise on the canals between Amsterdam and Vienna. In Mainz we stopped at the Gutenberg Museum where we saw some of the original bibles printed by Johannes Gutenberg. At the end of the tour there was a demonstration of the formation of a character of moveable type using amalgam. Only then did I understand the great engineering that went into the invention of producing type on a large-scale basis.

Against the walls of the demonstration area there was a line of historic typesetting machines on display. At the end of that line was a Mergenthaler Linotype typesetter like the one that was used when I was writing sports and setting headlines back in high school. It is an elaborate machine that set and justified lines of type on hot lead slugs. (See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mergenthaler_Linotype_Company for a picture of one of those formidable machines.) I used to stand transfixed watching the typesetters turn out line after line of type. They and their machines are all gone because typesetting is done by photocomposition these days.

One of the artifacts that I have from that era of print is a line of type with my byline on it. A picture of it on a mirror (to invert the reversed type) is shown above. It represents one of my first bylines, just as the one at the end of this piece is my penultimate byline for *Optical Engineering*.

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